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THE VENDOR OF DREAMS

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THE VENDOR OF DREAMS

JULIAN HAWTHORNE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
HASKELL COFFIN

DECORATIONS BY
JOHN O'NEILL

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD, AND COMPANY
1917

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THE FLIGHT OF DAYS

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THE VENDOR OF DREAMS

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DEDICATION

TO

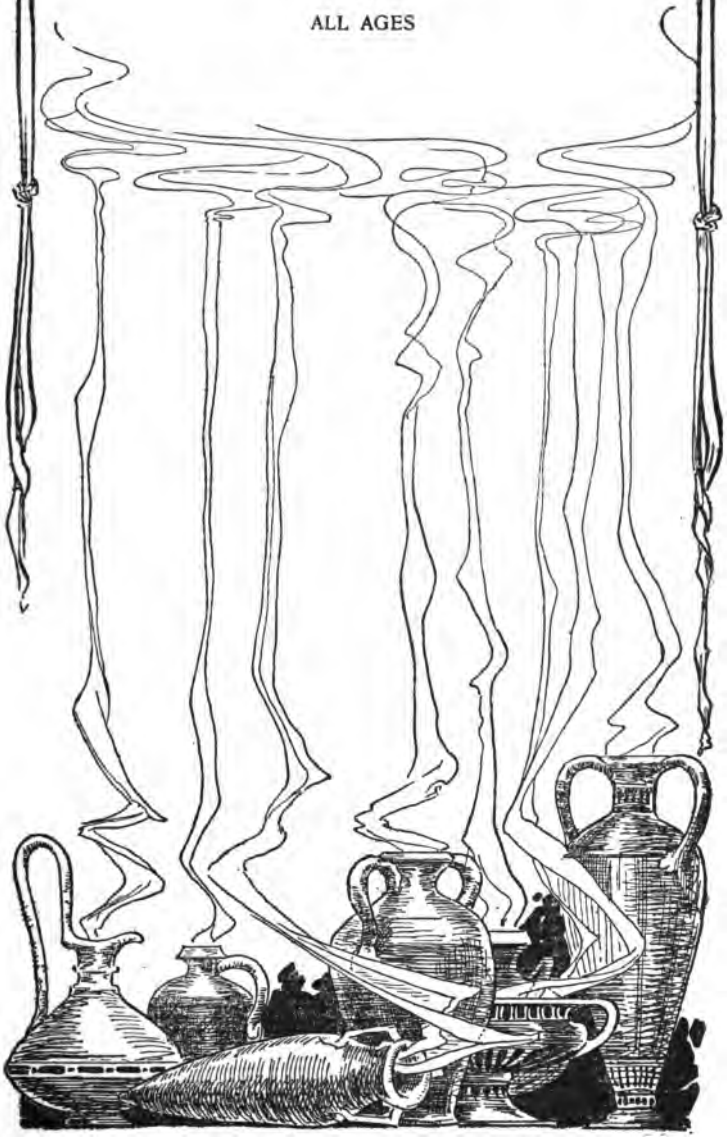
THE LORDS OF SPLENDOR

AND THE

LIGHT-BRINGERS

OF

ALL AGES



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The Precious Wares

WHO'LL BUY MY WARES?

CHILD OF THE IMMORTALS

THE QUEST

THE BLESSÉD AND THE DAMNED

THE PLAINT OF THE PILGRIM SOUL

THE WOMAN, ALONE! ALWAYS ALONE!

THE PHILOSOPHER-SAGE

THE CRY OF THE UNBORN SOULS

THE MAN OF SCIENCE

THE SEED, THE BLOSSOM, AND THE FRUIT

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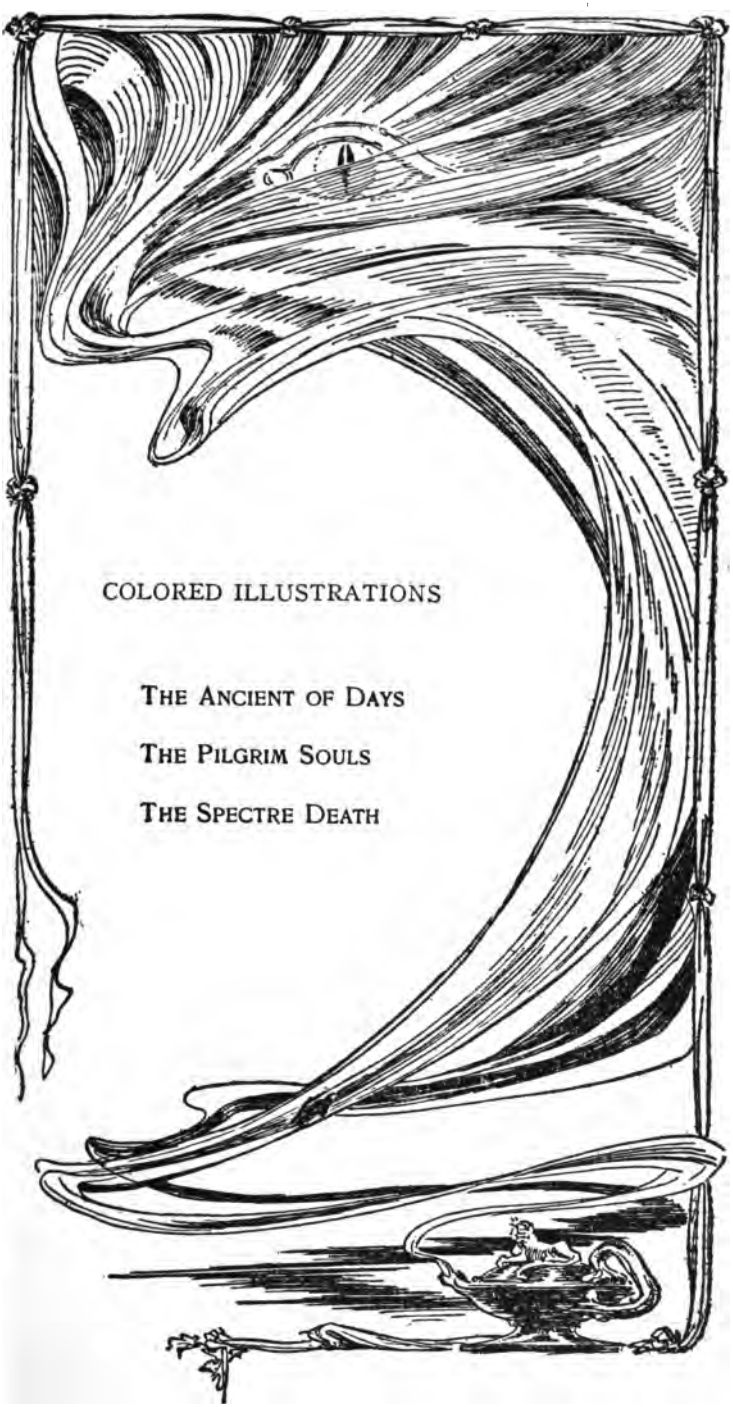

COLORED ILLUSTRATIONS

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

THE PILGRIM SOULS

THE SPECTRE DEATH

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"WHO'LL BUY MY WARES?"

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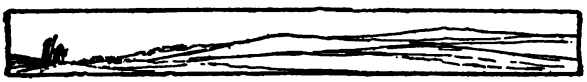

"WHO'LL BUY MY WARES?"

ALONG the main street of a great city: a city in the East, from whence the sun sends his informing rays to all Being; there slowly crept an old, old man.

Hoary with age, he tremblingly drove before him a small ass, who was surely the great-grandfather of all the asses, so overweighted did he seem with wisdom and with years. Depending from either side of the small saddle upon his back were great jars, inflated water-skins and huge bundles.

So overladen was he that only his head with its pendant ears, and his hindquarters could be seen. His master guided his ways by a small rod with which he occasionally touched the faithful beast, more as an indication as to the course he was to take than from an assumption of authority; for between this master and slave there seemed to be a most perfect understanding.

The old man himself might have been anywhere from one hundred to five hundred years of age. He seemed to have reached the limit of the cycle of humanity, and since then to have remained in a crystallized state. His face appeared to be carven out of yellow ivory, every wrinkle be-

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ing as immovable and fixed as fate; the only living thing about him was his eyes, which burned into your being with a fiery intensity, impossible to be endured for long.

Around his head was folded a worn yellow turban, and his robe, once white, but now with the accumulated dust of years upon it, clung closely to his shrunken form. His sinewy, wasted, hands, protruding from the loose sleeves, continually trembled as if seeking to lay hold upon some elusive object.

Occasionally there issued from his thin lips a weird and startling cry—"Who'll buy my wares? Who'll buy my wares?"

Most people laughed when they looked upon these two miserable creatures,—as if any one wanted the old bundles and water-skins! The children stuck out their tongues and jeered as they passed; while some of the more venturesome threw small pebbles, which, on striking the jars, gave forth such a hollow sound that they cried: "There's nothing in them, they are empty, quite empty."

On he went in the early morning; in the glare of the noonday sun; in the dusk of the evening, with his ceaseless cry: "Who'll buy my wares? Who'll buy my precious wares?"

Few stopped the old man; but one day in the falling of the dusk, a woman's voice called from an upper casement behind a carven lattice work—"Stop! old man, stop!"

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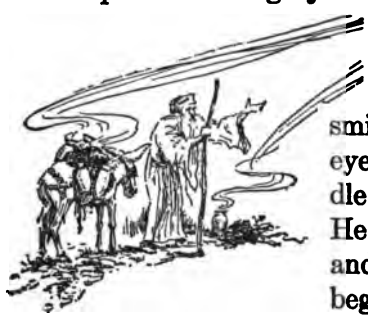
The little ass seemed to know instinctively what she wished, and halted before the door of the house. Both waited silently until a small grating in the upper part of the door was opened and the woman looking out spoke:

"Tell me, Oh, Ancient One! what it is you have for sale? I'm curious to know, for never have I seen you unfold your bundles nor show your wares to any man. Let me see the precious things you have concealed, for maybe I will choose to buy."



There was a faint smile in the old man's eyes as he took a bundle from the ass's back. He put it on the ground, and untying the string began to separate the rags. For some moments he continued, until the end was

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reached; there was nothing within. He calmly proceeded to take down a jar which he uncovered. The woman leaned forward and peered into its depths. She drew back and lifting her lustrous glance to the old man's face, exclaimed:

"You silly fool! What do you mean by offering nothing for sale? Begone with your old ass!"

With calmness the Ancient of Days replied: "I have wares to sell for which, Oh woman! you would barter your greatest treasure. I am a seller of dreams." And the woman laughed loud and long.

"Your wits need mending, old addlepate," she cried. "I want more than dreams. I want substance, real substance, gold, real gold"; and, after a pause, "Love, real love! I'd sell my soul for love."

"I can give you all, oh, daughter! All! Anything you wish," quavered the old merchant.

"Thou art mad, indeed!" and she threw her head back with a derisive laugh, showing her even white teeth, and pushing the heavy braids of hair from either side her oval face.

"You mock me! Give me back then my splendor of beauty, my glory! my passion! my hope! my heart's desire! Halt the footsteps of the years, restore the sweets of long ago, my mother's smile, my child-

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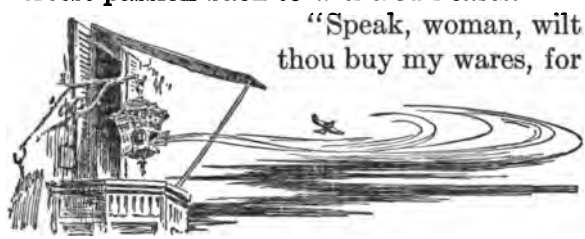
hood days; the dear of heart whose eyes are glazed in death.

"Canst thou then backward turn the wheel of Life, Oh, Wise One! and return to me lost youth! lost joys! lost faith! lost honor?" and she laughed again, her low derisive laugh. "If thou canst do this I will pay thee thy price—the full price—oh mad Vendor of Dreams."

"All this I promise, my daughter; for what is life but a fitful dream, soon passed. The dreamer possesses the earth. For in dreams the beggar becomes a king—the broken-hearted are made whole—the blind see, the deaf hear, and those whom death has parted meet again in radiant joy. In *my* precious dreams I restore lost youth, lost faith, lost honor; and bring love's fiercest passion back to withered hearts."



"Speak, woman, wilt thou buy my wares, for

others wait."

"Indeed, old man, thou dost promise over much; but if thou bringest to me the last, even if only of the smallest fraction, I will sell to thee my soul."

"According to thy desire, so be it," and

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the Ancient of Days stretched forth his arm and touched her with the tip of his rod.

Immediately the soul of that woman freed itself from her body, and flew as a bird from its cage.

* * * * * * *

Two children, a boy and a girl, stood ankle deep in the soft, dewy grass, pelting each other with great hands-full of pink-petaled apple blossoms. Their lithe, delicate bodies showing golden in the morning sun were naked, save for a white cloth twisted around their loins.

Their happy laughter filled the air, while they chased each other between the trees in the orchard which lay on the slope of the hill.

"Come Thera!" the boy cried, "let me crown you with this wreath," and he put upon the burnished curls of the girl a wreath of the apple blossoms he had twined together. "You are my queen," he said, "and when I grow up I'll be a king and make you a real queen, for I love you! only you."

The girl bent her head for the diadem of flowers, and laughing, said: "Ah! when you're a king, Agathon, no other shall be your queen, for I love you, too. We'll always, always be together," and, clasping each other's hands, they flew down the

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hill at the sound of a voice calling from a low white house at the foot, buried in dark green trees.

* * * * * * *

The fluted columns of a temple to Vesta glistened white in the distance between the branches of the thick grove which surrounded it, while the slanting rays of the setting sun pierced the forest with long fingers of light, which here and there touched a leaf, or festooned vine, illuminating and defining each from its companions with a separate glory and glint of color.

Underneath the trees two walked as one with arms entwined and heads close touching. There was silence between this maiden and youth, but it was a silence which was pregnant with unspoken hopes, unvoiced desires, and delirious longings.

The very air around them seemed vibrant with fitful strains of music.

"Thera!" whispered the youth Agathon: "Do you remember when we were children, how we promised to love each other forever, and to be always together? And now!" She turned her eyes, suffused with tears, upon the youth, "Oh, Agathon! It was not by *my* will that I was snatched from you and promised to the service of our Virgin Vesta. Seven years have passed, seven long years, since I, a child, was brought

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to yonder temple and taught to light and keep the sacred fire burning. In all that time I have not ceased to think of you, Agathon. But alas! for thirty years I must perform this service, according to my vow."

"That cursed vow," hoarsely whispered Agathon, under his breath. "You were mine before. By the Gods! you were always mine from the time when your dear eyes first unclosed upon this darkened world. You *shall* be mine again. I swear it!" and he took the sobbing maiden into his arms and pressed her close to his beating heart. "Fly with me by night; I'll hide thee by day. We will go to another land and live our life."

Her face paled to an ashy grey. "I cannot!" she gasped.

She shivered and paused in deep thought. "Thirty long years," she murmured, "my young life gone." Lifting her head, she cried, "My soul is free, why chain my body to this living death?"

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She started back as if a sudden precipice had yawned at her feet ready to engulf her.

"What is it, Thera? What!"

"The penalty! The awful penalty! Do you know that if a Vestal Virgin break her vow of chastity, she's buried alive! Think! Buried alive!" and her voice ended in a whisper of terror. She folded her veil across her face and bowed her head. Agathon drew her to him:

"Have courage, Thera! You are my soul. You are my other self made visible in matchless form. I will not live without you."

She threw herself into his arms.

"Our lives began together and will end together," she sobbed. "We cannot be divided."

So these two, blind and drunk in each other's presence and intoxicated with their love, sealed their fate with a long kiss.

"Come!" he said, and he took her by the hand.

Far above in the dark blue sky, a single brilliant star sprang into being. The cooing of the turtle doves had almost ceased. The voices of the grove had died away, and the insects of the night were sleepily calling one to another.

Hand in hand the two, as one, softly disappeared into the shadow.

* * * * * * *

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Her white robes torn, her veil rent, Thera, the beautiful Vestal Virgin, was being carried to her doom; the rabble followed jeering; some were sobbing in pity for the lovely maiden, yet scarce daring, seeing she had braved the law and sinned against the Gods.

Her awful doom had come. The sentence passed.

It was in June, when the Vestalia were held in honor of the goddess; but the loveliest of all the Virgins was now to be buried in a subterranean vault outside the gates of Delphi. A light, a scanty supply of bread and water, milk and oil, were placed within the tomb, which yawned to engulf this young soul who had loved o'er much.

They took her on a bier as one dead; a white cloth was spread over her, and a few flowers.

She lay immovable until they lowered the bier to place her in the vault. One wild shriek of agony rent the air, and the door was closed and sealed with the seal of the Pontifex.

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An hour after, at the dusk, a runner all but spent, catching his breath as if each one might be his last, tottering, gasping, groaning, flung himself upon the sealed door of the vault. "Thera!" he cried, "Thera! I come!" and he plunged a dagger in his heart up to the hilt.

* * * * * * *

The woman stirred uneasily in her sleep, opening her eyes she looked around with wonder at her old room. Was this then a dream; that she met an old, old man who touched her with his rod? She rubbed her eyes, arose and peered through the lattice window above the door. The old man and his ass had disappeared.

She laughed and sobbed. "Oh, Wise One, I'll pay thee thrice over, to feel that same fierce joy again, to live it through once more. Ah! *that* was Love—true Love!"

"Which is the real life, Oh, Ancient of Days, and which the dream?" But the old man, who alone could have told her, was already far beyond the city's gates.

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CHILD OF THE IMMORTALS

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CHILD OF THE IMMORTALS

As the "Aged One" with his ass stopped at a well, to slake his thirst and that of the patient beast, he saw a man sitting on a rock near by with his head bowed between his hands.

So still was he that one might think he was carven out of the selfsame rock. The "Vendor of Dreams" cast a penetrating glance upon him and the man raised his head. He too laughed as his eyes rested on the sorry pair before him.

"What have you for sale, old merchant-jars of oil, and water for the thirsty?"

"Aye, brother! Even so! I have here that which will quench the thirst of your desires, and I'll wager you, the wares that I can sell are more precious than life itself."

The man stood up. "What mean you, stranger? What can your jars and water-skins hold but oil and water?"

"Even so, Brother, oil and water, oil for the wounded spirit and water for the thirsty soul," and the old man smiled. "Will you drink!" he asked.

"Wounded in spirit and thirsty of soul, Old Man, am I, but you speak in riddles."

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"What is life then but a riddle? I am a 'Vendor of Dreams'," said the aged One.

"I want no dreams, old Sage. I've dreamed enough. I want reality, here and now, upon this scarred old earth, where all seems twisted and awry. Where the wicked seem to triumph and the good go unrepaid."

"Little Brother," replied the Wise One, "truly this life on earth is a horrible reality, but beyond the gate of Death is the world of Peace eternal; between the two lies the kingdom of our dreams.

"We enter this kingdom not only by night but by day, and the dreams we dream by day are our only salvation."

"You mock me, merchant! Of what utility are dreams? They serve to cheat us for a while, but when we face the stern reality of the Cosmos which hems us in, we want no dreams, we want the true"; and the man clasped his hands until the cords stood out upon them.

"Peace, Brother," cried the Ancient One. "*I have said, the Dreamer possesses the Earth.*"

And the man pondered deeply. At length, lifting his head, he spoke.

"I've dreamed glorious dreams for my country, of a State where the Ruler ruled with love, when gold and gain were naught, and sacrifice was joy. And I have thought

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to stem that mighty 'sea of sorrow formed of the tears of men.'

"What good, O Ancient One, was it to dream thus greatly; what good to think high thoughts? I've failed, I've failed," and the man flung himself on the rock in a passion of regret, and buried his face in his hands.

The Vendor of Dreams drew near. "Child of the Immortals, cease thy grief. Thou *hast not* failed. Thou shalt yet behold with undimmed sight the fabric of thy dreams, reared high, and built within a deathless world.

"Thou shalt live once more thy vision in the great Beyond, and dream it o'er and o'er again, until it shall be real in the world of men." And the Ancient "Vendor of Dreams" stretched forth his hand, and touching the man with the tip of his rod, he sank in deep slumber upon the rock.

Meanwhile the Wizard Great passed slowly on his old appointed way and left the sleeper there with darkened eyes, with muffled ears and silent speech, but straight before his eager undimmed soul there stretched a splendid vision of his coming Quest.

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THE QUEST

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THE QUEST

THE man lay slumbering upon the earth, in deep forgetfulness, while a brooding silence, heavy with darkness, enveloped him as with a cloak.

Close upon the night, when the sun withdrew his splendor, Death came and looked on him with envious eyes.

"C o m e ! Come!" he c r i e d, "Awake! Awake and go with me!" Drawing near, he touched a spot of light which dimly shone between the brows of the sleeper; then stooped and curiously gazed into his face. "Not yet," he whispered, "not yet. The Lord of life hath passed this way." And envious Death, with noiseless feet, withdrew into the shadowy mist.

* * * * * * *

"Aha! Aha!" the maskers cried, "what have we here? Let's wake the sleeper." They dragged him up, wreathing his head with purple grapes. They pressed the red wine to his lips. He staggered forward with half-closed eyes, and clutched their outstretched hands in wonder.

"Awake!" they shouted, "who sleeps while the sun is high? Come where flowers, red and blue, upon the hillside grow." "Come

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within the forest deep, where cool streams murmur in the shade and the silver trout leap in the brook. Soft lips are pressed to ours, and softer eyes drop golden glances while the pipers play. Joy thrills the air, why waste the time in slumber?"

He gazed upon them with his troubled eyes. "My Quest!" he cried, "I seek—I seek—what do I seek?" And they laughed in his face. "All the world seeks happiness, so do we; and thou fool, go with us, and find thy Quest."

Then the man, full-primed, joined with the maskers' song and danced beneath the shining sun, as one who had no care. On the hills and through the dells their happy laughter thrilled until the echoes fled from peak to peak and died within the purple distance.

* * * * * * *

At length, with burning heart, the man sought love.

"Is this my Quest?" he thought, and forthwith plunged into the Sea of Life. The booming waves dashed high the flotsam and jetsam upon the rocky shore, and beat each human fragment out upon the cruel stones. With pitiful cries these fragments rose again and yet again, and, plunging back into the living sea, they drank once more its bitter waters dry.

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He joined the throng. Forward he pressed with flaming heart and eager eyes. The love-light in each woman's glance the beacon was which drew him to the ends of earth. Here a smile and there a look, anon snared in a golden mesh of rippling hair, or caught upon twin coral lips as a butterfly upon a flower. He dallied while soft hands beckoned him, and held him with their magic power.

There was he, where the wine flowed red, and the rose blushed red, and red were the mouths of women, who cried to him, "Oh! follow, follow us, we'll lead thee on to Paradise!"

He tarried with them many a day, from the rosy sun of morn to the blood-red sun of eve.

For them he wasted life and strength; he gave his red blood up in many a strife, in many a battle fought—the guerdon was, a woman's smile. Was Love that flaming star which ever shone, rose-red before him? "Yes! Yes! here is my Quest!" he cried—and the women with red mouths smiled back at him.

"I follow you to Paradise!" And he pursued the women, who ran forward with fleet feet, and mellow songs, with glancing smiles and beckoning hands. "Come, come," they sang, "with us, with us, to Paradise."

* * * * * * *

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Sadly he walked with drooping head, the day turned grey. The yellow leaves swirled with the wind in blackened heaps. The flowers lay withered on their stalks, the empty vessels where the wine flowed red lay cracked and broken at his feet. Weary with the Quest, he raised his faded eyes. "My Paradise, lost Paradise," he said, and looked across the dark waters toward the distant shore.

He sprang upon his feet, he listened close. The sound of music, tinkling clear, was wafted on the quiet air. He caught a glimpse of fairy forms, all clothed in white and clinging robes, which floated like a misty cloud around each slender form. It seemed to him they beckoned, Come! Again he heard, or *thought* he heard, "Oh! come with us to Paradise!"

Hope lit his sombre eyes. Once more with outstretched hands he followed where they led—the women, white and innocent. With soft imploring hands and gentle words they soothed his spirit sore. They gave him love and comfort, home and friends. With them he tarried long.

Time passed—he yearned as one who mourns the dead.

"Have we not given of our all?" they cried, these women white and innocent. "We've made the Earth a Paradise for you." They bowed their heads with broken sobs.

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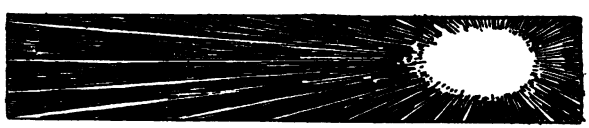
The man gazed at them with far-seeing eyes. "Yes, yes!" he said. "I've loved you well, but I must seek my Quest."

Then one among the fairest hung about his neck with clinging arms. "Oh, stay with me. *I* am thy Paradise, thy Quest."

But the man unwound her arms and put her from him. "I must away. I hear Fame's trumpet ringing down the ages. I see the fringe of glory on the mantle of the kings—the Kings of knowledge great and deep are they. For *that* I'll climb, I'll strive, I'll work. No more I'll dally with the flowers of May—no more I'll seek the Paradise of Love. Knowledge, wide, deep, high—Light, more Light, that is my Quest." And he ran forward to meet the rising Sun.



For years he trod the path of knowledge. Alone for years, with bleeding feet, he climbed the rocky heights, and in the valleys deep he prayed for "Light, more Light. Give me more Light," he cried, "ever more Light."

A pale Seraph looked gently down from up beyond the azure sky, to see who dared to emulate the gods.

The man looked up, and *thought* he saw a star's faint tremble in the celestial blue.

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On he pressed. Fame crowned his brow —it ached beneath the crown. Men bowed the knee. With but a glance he passed. "More Light, more Light," was still the burden of his cry.

He wrenched the secret from the sullen Earth, to him the sea gave up its prey. With cunning art, he tore the veil from night's dark face and numbered all the glorious army of her stars.

He wrought in hidden ways of Earth, and handed men the prize he won;—'twas ashes in his mouth.

With pallid face, and daring high, he pressed toward the Sun, until his cry "More Light, more Light," rang clear through Heaven's high vault. Leaving his foot-prints upon the sands of Earth, he climbed the haunts of Cherubim.

They pressed between his outstretched hands the victor's palm. Upon his aching head, the crown.

He fell upon his knees.

Then Cherubim and Seraphim, angels with beating wings, and those who wore white garments dipped in blood, cried out with one glad cry, "Here is thy Quest."

But the man, with unslaked thirst, tnrust aside the Cherubim and Seraphim, and those who wore white garments dipped in blood, and cried aloud again, "*More Light, still, still more Light,*" while Heaven's High Host,

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with sheltering wings, shielded the white glory from his dazzled eyes. Trembling he pressed between their ranks and stood before the Throne.

The blinding radiance streaming forth from out the God of Flame smote the man between the eyes, and he beheld his Quest.

* * * * * * *

At last he woke. In wild astonishment he gazed upon the dusty road. The pale moon hung low in the sky, the twilight haze lay quivering soft around.

"How now, thou Ancient One," he cried, "if this be a dream, then blessed be thou who wrought such dreams, for nevermore will Earth be dark, nor sorrow's tears, nor bitter pain be mine, for I've beheld my Quest."

He looked around, he gave a start, for lo! the Vendor of Dreams had disappeared. He was alone.

* * * * * * *

The Ancient of Days moved slowly on; before him walked the little ass, his burden on his back; and still the ceaseless cry went forth, "Who'll buy my wares, my precious wares?"

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The darkness fell, and still they walked, this curious pair, when straight from out the gloom there came a moaning cry. The little ass stood still, and sniffed the cool dark air—his Master turned his patient eyes upon a prostrate form which lay before him in the dust. He stooped to see who lay upon the ground; "Come, come, arise! I'll cure thy grief. Behold my wondrous wares!" The man arose full slowly and with effort spoke.

"What I sore need I cannot buy. Thou fool! Go on thy way. No blesséd one am I, but damned and lost. I do not choose to buy."

The Old One laughed his quavering laugh —the little ass brayed loud. In anger the man cried, "Begone, thou gibbering fool, from out my way." But the Wizard smiled, raising his rod he touched the man upon his breast. He sank upon the ground, while slow before him passed the vision of the "Blesséd and the Damned."

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THE BLESSÉD AND THE DAMNED

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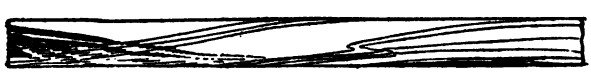
THE BLESSÉD AND THE DAMNED

THE sleeper turned him in his sleep, and from his pallid lips there came a muffled cry. His soul, enwrapped and swathed in dense clouds of earthly vapor, lay enthralled, unable to burst the chrysalis which imprisoned it, seeking relief in futile sighs and broken mutterings which rose and fell like the moaning of a lonely sea.

Now and then a cry of anguish quavered forth from the prison house and took its flight, stirring the cloudy vapors into waving currents. Between long pauses which seemed filled with slowly drifting, darkly mysterious shadows, the fitful cries gained more and more coherence until at last, word-like sounds came from the enshrouded soul as if each utterance tore away some fibre of its being.

So, stirring as the babe enclosed within the womb, who with stretchings and strivings burst with one great wondering cry into the world of day, so did this soul at last send forth a call, so fraught with strong despair as faintly to pierce the partition wall which but thinly divides the Damnéd from the Blessed.



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This wordless cry was flung back and forth, again and yet again, from one great gulf to another, echoing and reverberating, until it dropped into a vast and bottomless abyss.

It now seemed to the soul that silent centuries passed with noiseless tread, before it caught a faint, tremulous vibration, as if the wing of bird in flight had stirred the etheric calm.

At first only soft floating notes, as sounds from an Æolian harp, broke the silence. The Damnéd one strained to hear.

Again the melody came in chords, now faint, now loud, striking clear upon the door of his heart. He muttered in broken guise of speech. The strain of music ceased, a voice shaped itself out of the scattered chords, and from the other side of the thin partition which divided the blesséd from the damned, awakening from serene and blissful contemplation, the blesséd one answered to the cry of the brother soul.

The music of the voice fell as balm upon the sorrow-laden one, while a pale ray of golden light penetrated through the enwrapping vapor and lay upon the bleeding heart like the healing touch of a soft finger.

But the damnéd one shivered and struggled beneath the mist of darkness which so long had covered it, while wingéd flames floated upward from the dusky clouds.

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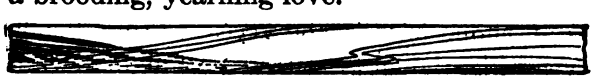
Across the fathomless abyss of silence again and again were flung those long-drawn cries of anguish, of wild, delirious hope, of wonder. Astonished, the tortured soul caught the answering chords, tremulous, enquiring, vibrant. It lay entranced, fearing to lose a strain so rapturous, so dear. As one engulfed within the bosom of the earth alone, the death-clutch on his heart, shrieks aloud with joy, for he has caught the sound of tapping on his prison-wall, so did this long enshrouded soul quiver in ecstasy at the thrill which reached it from a brother-heart.

Mad with joy, it sprang from its lair, and with the force of its desires took on a form, its old accustomed form. It stretched its limbs, it exulted in youth, in golden prime, the hot blood flowed again in a tumultuous flood, pulsating with the fulness of life. . . . Somewhere, deep in submerged consciousness, lay the memory of having "died."

What matter, since it now awaked to sentient life. The current of sympathetic thought thrilled and trembled through the mysterious barrier once more, and the awakened soul cried aloud in awe and triumph, "Alone no more. Ah! not alone!" while the silence all about was filled with a brooding, yearning love.



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Lo! through the partition which but thinly divides the Blesséd from the Damned came the sound of a voice angelic, "Beloved, I have waited long. I feel thy presence, but I cannot see thee. Come nearer, thou beloved."

The damnéd one, with the madness of joy, broke into conscious speech at last, and voiced the longing of its soul. "Who art thou," it cried, "who speak'st to me of Love? Oh, blesséd one, bend nearer with thy divine and balmy presence; touch the golden string of memory, and bring to me the dear forgotten past of which thou were a part."

And the blesséd one with clearer vision spoke, and, by reason of great pity and great longing, rent apart the curtain of the past and plucked from the screen of time the passing memory of two lives.

* * * * * * *

"They found thee lying on the desert sands, with parched and blackened lips, faint fluttering heart-beats told of lingering life; thy beast lay dead beside thee. My runners brought thee in, 'a dead man,' they said, and laid thee down anear the desert well. I, the queen, passed idly by and looked upon thy face. At once a dim star shone within the recess of my being; yearning thoughts stirred within me, while

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a dream of heart's-delight came rushing like a flame across my vision.

"I bade them tend thee; I myself bathed thy temples, and dropped cooling drops upon thy parchéd tongue. From the stores of the caravan they brought wine and healing herbs. As life crept back into thy pallid face, thine eyes, big with wonder, unclosed; fastening upon mine, they drank my soul as the thirsty hart drinks in the forest stream.

"Dost remember?" And from the other side of the partition wall which but thinly divides the blesséd from the damned a glad cry smote the air.

"Aye! Aye! I mind me now. I wandered midst the wasting sand, raving mad, and dying; fearsome phantoms, premonitors of death, flying ever before me, until I dropped into the darkness.

"Tell me more, oh! blesséd one; fragments of long-forgotten joys, already float upon my memory's sea. I thirst for more." Then through the filmy, tenuous wall came vibrant strains of yearning love, which folded both the sinner and the saint in one harmonious embrace.

"Could I but see thee, love, what joy 'twould be," deep sighed the blesséd one.

"After dark void, enough it is to hear thy voice, ah! well remembered now. Go on! Go on!"

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"From then we knew no other than ourselves; it was enough to bask within the light of our dear love. I, the Queen, the proud Empress of the East, forgot all other joys for thee."

"Oh, pure one! Oh, dear one, I live again in memory's haunts."

The blesséd one again spoke: "And I, alas, forgot my duty in my passion for thee, my guilty lover. Enough it was for me that thou wouldst lay thy head upon my breast, and I would lure thy senses into peaceful sleep with soothing palm. Alas! the poisonous snake already lurked within our paradise; already raised the hand, which was to murder our love's dream.

"The Prince of Aja claimed me for his own by right of kin. The trumpet's red blare sounded hoarse throughout the land. The banners floating in the breeze proclaimed our wooing. The Cohorts gathered, the great Leaders rode in solemn bearing at their head, approving our choice.

"The glad nation rose in wild acclaim. All night, all day, the glittering throng streamed on in never-ceasing motion, creeping across the plain towards the city, like unto a monstrous serpent with glancing scales of green and gold.

"Alone our sad hearts trembled 'neath the jeweled robes. The perfumed halls, bedecked with flowers rare, and fronds of

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palm, were ready for our nuptial night, and naught remained to do before the breaking of the dawn which was to bring the Prince to my abode."

Stifled sighs and moans of anguish came sifting through the curtain dense which parted these two souls.

"Ah! well do I remember now, oh, blesséd one, so doth Desire, the 'Master Knave,' tempt us on, luring us into his toils, in guise of Love. On fire with love for thee, my peerless beauty, unheeding the great powers which stood behind the throne, I dared to dream of holding thee within my arms.

"Wild with despair at thought of him, who even now was drawing near to pluck my lily from the stem, and wear it on his heart, unheeding, unknowing, my wingéd feet took me swiftly to my doom."

And now from the blesséd one came the sharp cry of a wounded heart: "Alas! dost thou remember that?"

In the slow pause which dropped between these two there arose ever-changing hues of colors rare, melting now here, now there, into new and gorgeous dyes, jewel-flecked with gold and silver. Strange perfumes exuded from these colors rare, intoxicating the two lovers with long-forgotten bliss.

These hues, these scents, congealed them-

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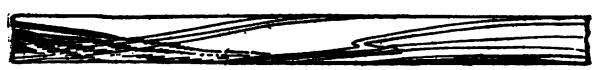
selves, and beat as wingéd thoughts within their hearts in pulsing waves of feeling.

These thoughts in turn gave birth to forms, which clothed themselves anew in memory's garb. Bridging Time's gulf, they brought the present into fairer light from the phantom sea of dark oblivion.

Again the blesséd one took up the tale.



"Thou camest up by the dense ivy which clambered high upon my tower walls, springing through the open casement into my arms. Only one short hour now before the dawn. Softly thou didst speak: 'Haste! Haste! my love. The stars grow pale.'

"Ah! but the guards kept watch outside my chamber door, and we listened to the maiden's soft breathing in the anteroom. 'Twere death to thee, if one awoke and found thee here.

"Unafraid, thou didst plead with me to fly the morrow. The marriage over, in the twilight, thou would'st meet me at the garden door, outside my bridal chamber. Together we would flee into the desert, and beyond.

"Ah, blind indeed are mortals to their fate; and who can escape the destiny deep written on his soul.

"Thou stood'st before me as a God—

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thine eyes looked into my soul, straight, as one who sees his death before him. 'Wilt thou come?' My heart leapt to thine in answer, but my lips replied 'I cannot, oh, my love, forgive!

"'I dare not cast my duty off as Queen of all my people. I sacrifice myself with joy, but thou, beloved one, thou!' I threw myself upon thy neck, straining thee to my heart in anguish dread. Thou didst thrust me from thee, distraught at my reply; fierce anger seized thy brain.

"'Then thou dost love the Prince!'

"I shrank as if the words had been a blow, and fell upon the couch.

"A faint light crept upon the chamber wall; the dawn was coming blood-red from the desert, and one by one the midnight stars withdrew their watching eyes.

"A moment more, I shivered as I saw the horror on thy pallid face; trembling, as if rooted to the ground, drawing each breath as if it were the last—thine eyes were fixed as if thou saw'st a vision.

"Drawn as by invisible but mighty hands, I came nearer to thee. Without a word thou didst leap toward me. seizing me in

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thy strong arms; and, crushing me upon thy breast until my breath was almost spent, thou didst plunge a dagger in my heart.

"I knew no more."

* * * * * * *

A cry of anguish and of triumph came from the damnéd one.

"Yes, crazed with grief, I killed thee, but I loved thee well, and now I've found thee.

"My expiation, for long centuries to be immured within these walls of silence, alone without thy smile, e'en memory gone of thee and thy dear love.

"Dost thou forgive me, well-beloved?" And from the blesséd one came a glad murmur as of soft laughter, and the thin partition thinner grew, until the two dimly discerned each other's shapes as objects through a mist.

The damnéd one now strove to rend the curtain which still hung between, inexorable. With fierce cries and struggles he beat upon the dividing wall, the blesséd one beyond meanwhile praying with strong entreaty, mixed with tears, for the liberation of their souls.

When hope had almost died a shape of beauty floated from above, and a voice of heavenly sweetness dropped as dew upon their souls.

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"Oh, foolish ones, see ye not there is no barrier. By thought alone 'twas formed, by thought alone is it destroyed."

"Behold! there *is no* damned, there *is no* blessed, but all are *one* within the Light of God."

The voice ceased.

Amazed, the two souls, with one triumphant cry, leaped together, and found themselves once more in Paradise.

* * * * * * *

With shining eyes the man arose, while the blessèd memory of Paradise still bathed his soul in joy.

"Was it a dream? It matters not," he said. "I've seen, I've felt, I've tasted of the Real; writ deep upon the conscious tablets of my soul.

"The pendulum low swings from waking on to sleeping, from Life to Death, but always swings it through great seas of pulsate consciousness alert with vibrant life.

"Which is the Real," he asked, "here or beyond?"

And while he spoke, the "Vendor of Dreams" pursued his ancient way. He traveled many a weary mile, when sud-

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denly the little ass pricked up his ears at sound of cymbals clang, and tinkling anklets ring.

The smell of incense rare, and perfume of the sandalwood, hung faint upon the breeze.

The old man sighed as if he too were weary, but no, 'twas but a fleeting memory of old!—when all at once a turn of the road revealed a low house standing 'neath the Palms;—within was sound of revelry and feast.

A woman darted swift from out the open door, and ran across the soft greensward.

She stood a moment still, then waved her hand to stop the wandering pair.

"Old man, old man, what have you there for sale?"

She came across the road and stood close by the two.

The Ancient of Days gazed for a moment steadily into her face.

"What dost thou need, oh daughter? Jewels and laces, silks and satins rare, of lustrous hue, silver and gold?"

The woman sighed, "Old man, I want no jewels, silks or satins, silver or gold, of

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these I have enough," and she sighed once more.

"I know not why I called—perhaps because I have a longing, a great longing—I scarce can tell you what it is—I'm tired—I'm tired of the glare, the dance, deceit and lies, the faithless, the untrue. Forsaken now, I walk alone. Unsatisfied, I live.

"No! No! I will not buy—for surely thou hast naught I need."

The Ancient One spoke low. "Be not so hasty, oh my daughter! For I can give you all you seek."

"Oh, Madman! What I need, would fill thy bundles old, thy jars and water-skins, thrice times, and thrice again. I've dreamed of wondrous things. It seemed sometimes as if I saw, behind the curtain of the sky, strange and mysterious sights."

The old man nodded. "Yes," he said, "of strange and wondrous things." He lifted up his rod and in mercy touched her bended head. She fell upon the sward.

For one brief moment the Master-Magician looked upon the prostrate form; then whispered soft, "Oh, pilgrim soul, behold thy vision clear."

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THE PLAINT OF THE PILGRIM SOUL

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THE PLAINT OF THE PILGRIM SOUL

FROM within the bosom of the dark unfathomable abyss of Space, there sprang a tiny spark.

It tremblingly vibrated for a time, and times—unmarked by centuries' flight, then dropped into the vast blue ether, hanging by a thread of golden light.

Simultaneously upon the bosom of this unfathomable abyss shone milliards of scintillating sparks, each holding by its thread of light, stirring the ether with exultant throbs, and streams of joyous melody.

These Pilgrim Souls, as yet unconscious of the fateful path of Necessity, which, stretched in immeasurable distance before them, shone with sheer bliss of Being.

Still in close union with their wondrous and mysterious Source, they knew naught but conscious joy.

Æons passed.

* * * * * * *

Suddenly a whir as of a million wings rent the blue Ether. Cold, as of the breath of Death, passed by, as the awful voice of the First Angel came forth, shaking the

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foundations of Eternity and summoning the listening stars. Each Pilgrim spark then knew that the dread Fiat had gone forth.

They shivered as they fell . . . down . . . down . . . away from their abode of bliss. Still clinging fast by their threads of gold, attenuated though they were, and pale, they dropped from point to point in awful Space, losing each time somewhat of their spendor, something of their radiant joy.

At length, drawn by a powerful and irresistible magnetism, they were caught within the toils of the great Ellipse of nebulous substance, the "Milky Way," the broad "River of Heaven" whose vast oval swept magnificently through the fields of Space and within whose mighty bosom the seed-stuff of future heavenly worlds whirled and seethed, crashed and collided, in fiery frantic effort, to give birth to comets, stars and planets.

Caught in the mighty grasp of the Lords of Karma, those Pilgrim Souls were hurled into a lower sphere, still beautiful, where they floated in serene and conscious bliss, in oval forms of substance, clothed in colors rare, which changed and vibrated responsive to their thought.

At last in deep repose they rested, still mercifully unaware of the long, weary road of Necessity, which stretched immeasurably on before them.

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Again æons passed, as, one by one, each beauteous sphere, obedient to the summons from within, floated silently down; descending into the womb of Matter, they finally emerged to walk upon the stony Path of Fate.

Drunk with the waters of Lethe, veiled, blind, and sorrow-laden, they roamed, forgetful of their Lordly lineage and of their high estate.

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THE WOMAN, ALONE! ALWAYS ALONE!

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THE SPECTRE DEATH

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THE WOMAN, ALONE! ALWAYS ALONE!

THE form of a woman lay face downward upon the burning sands. Occasional long-drawn moans betokened life, still chained unwilling to the weary body.

She lay for hours thus, bereft of movement. At last when the hot red sun had dropped behind the curtain of purple clouds which hung low upon the circle of the world, she stretched forth a parched and stiffened arm, as if to warn away the spectre Death, who stood apart with hooded head waiting to give the final stroke.

She stretched her other arm, when lo! her fingers touched the form of a whitened skeleton, which all unnoticed lay beside her.

With a stifled cry she turned and raised herself upon the sands. Her anguished eyes looked out across the arid waste—filled with regret, despair and utter loneliness, she wept. The silence lay unbroken by human sound.

Suddenly the woman shrieked aloud. "Alone! Always alone! The weird echoes took up the plaint and flung it back again—"always alone!"

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She rose and stood upon her feet, beating the air with futile, frantic hands, she cried, "there is no God." Appalled by her utterance she paused affrighted . . . then laughed aloud in scorn. "There is no God," again she called, and shivered in the silence. "If there were, He would have mercy shown, or else have struck me dead ere this."

She gazed around, as if expecting voices from the dreary sands. "Is there a God?" she questioned of the waste, and echo answered "God."

"They said my soul was lost—*my* soul." She laughed, a bitter laugh this time, when lo! instead of weird and distant echoes, a clear and still voice spoke in accents low. She sprang aside, as if she feared a blow; she looked around, but on the dull gray waste, there moved no living thing.

Again she heard the voice—this time it seemed to be within. "Who art thou?" she asked in whispered dread.

The voice replied: "Oh, woman, we two have journeyed long together. Dost thou not know me? Caught within the meshes of thy life, I suffer with thee, strive and toil with thee. With thee, I am haunted with the demon of loneliness."

"I know thee not," the woman moaned, "I *never* knew thee. Alone am I, always alone."

"Fool," said the Voice. "'Twas I who

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built thy body, atom by atom. I myself formed it a holy mansion for my use, and thou hast made it vile—so vile, it scarce can minister to my desires—I, who speak, I am *thyself*, thy *soul*.

"Imprisoned, bound, I long for freedom. Dragging me down into the mire of life, thou hast soiled my whiteness, dimmed the lustre of my being. Arise! and set me free!"

Aghast, the woman whispered in the dust, "I *never* knew you. Art thou a demon, that thou thus doth mock me?"

"I mock thee not," the Soul replied. "Oft, in the darkness of the night, I made my presence felt in dreams of bliss. Awaking in the morning thou didst feel a burden lifted from thy sorrowing heart. When, all forsaken, thou wert fallen in the dust, starving, stricken, bereft of all that men call dear, 'twas I, who whispered words of peace and hope· and yet thou didst not understand."

"Alas!" the woman moaned. "If then in man I found no help, no mercy, how could I hope to find it in a God whom I could neither see nor know?"

"Thou, the mortal, may not see nor know, but thou, the immortal, basks for ever in the Light of the Sun of Righteousness; for thou art a spark from that Great Sun, struck from the anvil of Life

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by the hammer of Destiny, fallen into the darkness of matter, from whence thou must with pain and travail work upward to thy Source once more."

"Oh, take away the pain," the woman cried—"enough, enough, I've had."

"I would not if I could," the Soul replied, "for only through the Golgotha canst thou walk upward to the Heights."

The woman shivered . . . "and then, what then, after the Golgotha?"

"Peace," said the Soul. . . . "for from the heights thou canst plainly see the road by which thou came—each fault, each sin, a step upon which thou didst mount upward to the Sun."

"What more is on the Heights, what more?"

"Love; from there thou canst behold a sea of boundless Love, upon whose broad expanse floats the Universe of weary souls like thine—pilgrims alike upon this sorrowful Star."

"I thought I was alone, always alone!" and the woman's pale and death-like face was flooded by a ray from that Great Sun in which all souls abide.

She stretched her wasted hands toward the brooding heavens.

Deep silence lay upon the sands. . . .

A long sigh escaped the woman's parchéd lips, as a chord broke within her heart,

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loosening the strain of life and sorrow; when, lo! the Demon of Loneliness flung off the cloak of darkness and became transformed into the Angel of Light and Love.

With overshadowing wings, it bore the soul of the woman up past the crescent moon, beyond the watching stars, up through the oval Ring where the slumbering Comets lay—up, still up, through sweeps of silver-white Angelic Beings, who hung, poised in Space, floating upon the Breath of God.

Up, still up, until at last the purified soul lay at rest upon the bosom of the Infinite, encompassed about with Peace and Love.

* * * * * * *

The woman stretched her supple limbs, and raised her heavy lids. Her eager eyes gazed wonderingly o'er trees and sky; she saw the low house still beneath the Palms, no lights within.

The sound of feast and revelry was hushed, the dancers gone. The pale cold moon was rising from the purple cloud which stretched above the dark green trees, spreading a silvery veil o'er all.

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She looked around amazed to find herself alone.

Where then was the Wizard old, with his rod and patient beast? Surely he had spoken to her of strange and wondrous things, of slumbering comets bright, of clear and watching stars, of floating, white angelic beings.

Oh, what Peace! What Love! it dropped like dew under the silver night. "It is no dream," she cried, and softly went her new-found way. * * * * *

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THE PHILOSOPHER-SAGE

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THE PHILOSOPHER-SAGE

FAR distant without the gates of a great city, a Philosopher-Sage, weary with much pondering on the scheme of Life, sat on a bench of stone, near the edge of the olive grove beside a limpid stream.

He sank his plummet line of thought deep into the Ocean's depths, if so he might discern the basic trend of things.

He sought to know the Primal cause, the Why, the Wherefore of the Cosmic plan. How from the Perfect One did imperfection first arise, and what the soul?

Weary with tossing to and fro this mental shuttlecock, he fell into deep slumber.

Softly and silently along the sandy road, came into view the little patient ass, lazily strolling before the Ancient Wizard of Dreams.

He stopped still in his tracks.

The Wise One pausing too, regarded long the sleeping Sage.

"He dreams," he said, and softly laughed beneath his breath; but I will give him of

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my choicest dreams, my splendid Cosmic dreams."

He forthwith laid his magic rod upon the sleeper's head.

The man stirred not, for deep in boundless and mysterious Space, among the stars he roamed. The Earth receded from his mental grasp, while the bright vision of the Soul unfolded to his gaze. He saw—he heard—The Cry of Unborn Souls.

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THE CRY OF THE UNBORN SOULS

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THE PILGRIM SOULS

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THE CRY OF THE UNBORN SOULS

As a child sleeps upon the bosom of its mother, so do "I" the naked unborn "I," repose in silent bliss upon a mighty Consciousness, a brooding Love. Upheld by this crystalline, pure and radiant splendor, I float in ecstasy, I dream, I sleep.

Enwrapped in tenderness most infinite, I am conscious but of Peace, a Peace which passes understanding, and which I do but sense.

Deep and deeper still I sink within the measureless depths of this profound and silent Peace.

The "I," the unborn "I," knows itself no longer a separate spark in this immensity.

Behold! I am become the Peace. I am become the Light, and now,—I fade, I melt into this Cosmic sea of nothingness. . . . I fade into Æonic Time.

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With awful suddenness a lightning flash from the mind of the Eternal God rent apart the mysterious depths of this entrancing Peace.

A sound as of a million mighty trumpets tore the darkness from the Light.

Three times the Heavens were rent, three times the voice of Awful Space rang out.

"Come forth! Come forth! Come forth! thou uncreate!"

The uncreated shivered in the depths, while a sound as of the cry of lost souls was wafted through the Heavens.

Again the voice was heard.

"Awake! Awake! Thou sleeping ones."

Slowly from the bosom of the Undivided One emerged the souls of atoms bright. Obedient to the harmony of God, they formed themselves in wondrous curves, in angles, squares, then moved upon the Cosmic Sea, with measured beat.

"Go forth! Go forth! increase and multiply," said the Eternal God. And the atoms were as grains of sand upon the shore of Time, while from the uncreated ones there came an awful cry.

"Oh, make us not to be reborn, thou Master God! Cast us not out from thy Eternal Presence dear! Break not our Peace, our rest!"

But the Great and Wonderful declared, "Go forth on thy appointed task, oh

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souls, go forth and manifest my glorious Will."

The souls moaned.

"Oh, must we go down into Earth's travail, down into the protean dust with awful labor, doomed to wander through the teeming Life, from cell to man? Oh God! we are aweary."

Then the Mighty One blew His breath upon the scroll of Time, and traced thereon their fated path upon the road of dire necessity.

Then the souls in anguish cried and struggled to escape, but caught within the meshes of the web of Life they struggled all in vain.

"Have pity Thou, the Master-God!" they plead. "Have pity thou!"

At last their lamentations ceased, and the Master with wondrous pity cast these pleading souls into the dark waters of Lethe where they mercifully forgot the vast, immemorial, splendid, radiant Past, of which they were a part.

Then the Master smiled . . . and gathered in his Mighty hands the shining threads on which these precious souls were strung, as pearls upon a golden cord, that none might drop unloved, unwatched.

He wrote their names upon white stones. He placed His signet on their hearts and in the warp and woof of Cosmic web, He

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wove a golden pattern rare, each wondrous flower and shape, a life, a soul.

"Oh souls!" He said, "thou art but motes upon the Cosmic sea, and cannot know the glorious goal to which thou now must press. Thou canst not know the "how" the "why" within the Eternal Mind, but press thou must, on this unending quest toward the perfect good.

"In patience bear the burdens thou hast made, full many for thy sorrow, thy solace but to lift a fragment of the woe of worlds, and dry a falling tear—so shall thy path be straight, thy victory sure, unto that wondrous and illimitable goal which scarce the minds of Highest Gods have dared to glimpse."

The Silence fell.

The Master placed His august hand upon the Spheres—and forthwith came a glorious peal of music from the Heavens which broke across the Sea of Life, and stirred it into Being. The countless hosts arose therewith, the infinitely small, the infinitely great. The teeming myriads thronged and seethed, and pushed and struggled into life, limitless, pulsating, breathing, multiplying.

Again the word went forth. "Awake, awake! Oh, myriad souls. Awake! and do my Will!"

Behold from out the teeming mass the souls appeared—some groveling still, deep

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in primeval mud, some bursting forth in plants and flowers sweet, while others lived in powerful beasts, and crawled in serpents vile.

But through the eyes of man alone, there looked the naked unborn "I," the soul—ancient, eternal, deathless, a wandering God, a pilgrim from the farther shore. And now begins its long and arduous climb, encased within its robe of flesh.

The awful pressure of relentless necessity forces it upon the path of growth, to be a God or else to fall as unripe fruit and perish by the way. Ever seeking the Light, which ever recedes before it, it sees no hope, save in a life to come.

Alone it treads the dark wine-press of sorrow, alone it walks the path of Power, until at last, one glad and glorious day this deathless soul, past all sorrow, past all care, looks out triumphant through the serene eyes of a God and knows that all is good, that all is just.

And now on the "Great Day-Be-With-Us" the Voice of the Eternal God thunders once more through space, crying "Come unto Me, my pilgrims souls, for thou art dear to Me. Come into peace and rest."

And the Souls, obeying the voice, rested in beatific peace until the dawning of another Cosmic Day, to issue forth once more to tread the Path of Power and point

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the way to lonely souls across the awful Ocean of Eternity.

* * * * * * *

The Sage unclosed his heavy eyes, not fully yet awake, for still before him passed the Cosmic dream of souls in making. In one brief instant he had caught a precious glimpse of the Creative Source; there, stamped upon his consciousness in ideas and words of living flame, he knew the Eternal Soul.

Not all his life of thought profound, not all his studies deep, had yielded him this concept of the True, which came as lightning swift across his mental sky.

It was his own, his very own, a revelation real, never to be erased in Time or in Eternity from the pure tablets of his soul. He thrilled with fresh and deep amaze.

A slight sound caught his ear. He turned —a little ass with bundles on his back was drinking from the limpid stream, while close beside him stood the Ancient Man of Dreams leaning upon his magic rod.

"Who art thou, Oh venerable, dusty one! Much travel-stained art thou. Hast wares to sell?"

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The old man nodded—"Yes," he said. "I have most precious wares."

Amused, the sage smiled in his face. "For sooth," he said, "great store thou settest by old water-skins, and jars, cracked now beyond repair. Whence comest thou?"

Gravely the Ancient of Days looked through the Sage.

"I come from Land of Dreams. These are the wares I sell."

"So," said the Sage, "'tis dreams thou sellest. Poor man, thou art as cracked as are thy jars. I'll walk with thee awhile." And the three went on together down the hill along the dusty road.

"Sage and Philosopher thou, and yet thou thinkest me a fool, crackbrained and old," replied the Wizard.

"I ask of thee forgiveness," said the Sage, "but that thou sellest dreams doth make me laugh. No longer doth mankind believe in dreams."

"Alas! I know. For them the gates of gold are closed, the entrance to their paradise fast barred; blind, blind are they," and the old man, lost in reverie, trembled a little as he walked. "Tell me," he said, "hast thou not dreamed great and magnificent dreams?" And he looked sidewise upon the Sage before him.

"Thou hast a meaning in thy speech!" cried the Seeker of Wisdom, and all three

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halted in their tracks. The little ass turned round his head, wagging his pendant ears, while curiously he gazed into the Sage's eyes.

His Master leaned upon his flank and rested while he spoke.

"I have a meaning, yes! a meaning deep.

"Just now in sleep thou hadst a vision rare. Far into Cosmic depths thou didst behold. The afterglow lies yet upon thy soul, the wonder in thine eyes."

The man quick asked of him the truth. "Dost thou then *know?*"

Once more the old man bowed his hoary head and smiling said,

"Thou didst behold the unborn souls, still resting in the bosom of the Uncreated One, and heard their plaintive cries."

"Oh, by the Gods, a Wizard great art thou," exclaimed the man. "Discover now to me thy secret lore," but the Old Man shook his head.

"I touched thee with my magic rod, and lo! the Serpent-fire leaping upward through the cord, sprang into the golden seed which swings within thy brain. Trembling it opened like a flower, and thou didst see thy vision."

"Touch me once more, oh Wizard rare—but lay thy magic rod upon me once again," entreated still the Sage.

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"Enough it is," the Wizard said, "that thou hast glimpsed the True. From now thou canst, thyself, look into the Root and Primal Cause.

"In Faith and Peace abide," and the Vendor of Dreams, with his wise and patient beast, disappeared from view at a sudden turn of the road.

For long the Sage stood wrapped in thought, then hastened on to seek the Treasure of the hills and the "small old Path, that stretches far away."

* * * * * * *

Time passed, and came, and passed again, while the Vendor of Dreams, unweary, calm, pursued his ceaseless way. Scorn nor derision stirred his equal poise; alike unmoved by thanks, or by ingratitude, he walked in endless search of those who sought the Real and the True.

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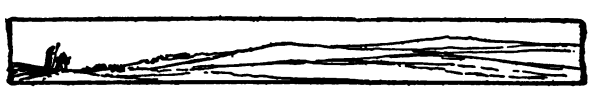

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THE MAN OF SCIENCE

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THE MAN OF SCIENCE

FRESH as the dawn the meadow stood, all clothed in living green. Field flowers, yellow, blue and red, lay star-like on its breast, while the early rays of morning sun shone warm upon the dew, casting a shimmering veil, translucent, bright, over the fields and streams.

The butterflies and bees, intent upon their quest, flew fast from flower to flower, sucking the honey sweet. Gorgeous were they of every hue, some rioting in purple, red and gold, and some ephemeral, pale, like phantoms 'neath the sun.

The air was filled with murmuring hum of myriad insect life. Exultant Nature called from every side, and in the midst a man of science stood, who with his net enmeshed the radiant butterflies—those fleeting symbols of the soul. He pinned them through, and bruised their lovely wings in vain and fruitless search.

He sought the final, secret origin of creatures all. He peered into the abyss of biologic time, endeavoring to bridge the gulf between the amœba and the man. Alas! with all his efforts great he could not

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make the smallest particle of matter thrill with that mysterious wonder we call Life.

And if he did create a form, and in it capture Life, whence came that Life?

Oh! endless, futile search.

The more he sought, the deeper spread before his gaze that vast mysterious gulf, impenetrable, dark. Suspended over this abyss, his trembling heart despaired for lo! these many years, continually he had asked of Science "What and where." Science could give but one reply.

"*We do not know.*"

He laid his net upon the ground and sat him down beside it, plunged in deepest thought. A thousand times he pondered on the trinity of Ether, Matter, Force. The supposititious Ether, what of it? "We do not know," he sighed; "and of matter—nothing, absolutely nothing do we know of any living body, *as it is.*"

His failure made him rage, he beat the ground with folded fist. "Of Energy," he cried, "what can we know, except by its effects."

He groaned aloud.

"If surely I could but perceive of what the heart and core of Atom bright consists, I then would know the Universe in which we Live—All! All!"

He flung himself upon the grass, weary and sore-spent; closing his eyes he tried

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to still his tired brain. A light cool breeze blew on his face, while the continuous hum of insect life drummed softly in his ears. He fell asleep.

When he awoke, the setting sun cast slanting shadows on the grass—a chill was in the air—his broken net beside him lay, the butterflies had fled.

He sat up in amaze, so sure was he that he had seen a little burdened ass, whose Master bore a rod.

The picture of the two seemed graven on his brain.

He well remembered how the old man smiled at him and bade him dream a splendid dream of evolution's trend.

His mind was trembling still with marvels great. The Music of the Spheres was sounding in his ears; the Light of thousand living things still left their radiance on his heart, and in the Ideal Cell he saw the promise and the plan, and now the unclouded panorama of the Soul, spread clear before him, from Seed to Blossom, then the Fruit.

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THE SEED, THE BLOSSOM, AND THE FRUIT

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plant; which bared its bosom to the Shining sun, and drank the dews of Heaven.

One joyous day, amid soft music strains, burst forth a flower, rare, complete. Its fragrance filled the earth, and wandered to the skies.

"After my own likeness have I made thee. Onward press."

And the seed cried,

"Who calls?"

Once more the Cosmic impulse sprang within the atomic cell, and while before it slumbered in the plant, it now awoke in beast and bird. Evolving still more conscious life, it filled the teeming earth with forms—monstrous, weird, and passing strange—anon, entrancing, beautiful—and rested from its labors.

"In My own likeness have I fashioned thee. Press onward to the crown."

And the seed cried once more,

"Who calls?"

From the dark womb of Nature there forthwith came a startled cry.

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"I wake, oh, Master! at Thy magic touch," and the cell grew, it burst its radiant heart. The monad climbed with arduous toil up, up, through all the wondrous paths of Conscious Life, "a stone, a plant, a beast, a man, a God," the apex of the mount.

Traced by the finger of the Eternal God the memory of its glorious past was writ within its heart, but the waters of Lethe bathed it o'er. It slumbered once again.

"After my own likeness have I fashioned thee."

"Arise and live, and love," and the Soul cried with joy,

"Who calls?"

Again the One makes two, the two make one.

The Builders flew to their appointed task. Layer upon layer they spread once more around the Ideal cell; with care they wrought within its walls, atom by atom, molecule by molecule, until the Ideal form angelic lay within its cradle dark, and crooned and sang; for lo! the Undivided One spoke through its shape the shape of Man.

High heaven rang out with radiant joy, the earth took up the strain and down in

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lowest realms was heard a faint but glad acclaim, "For unto us a Son is born."

"In My own likeness have I fashioned thee. Go live and love."

And the Soul cried aloud,

"Who calls?"

And now the Great Work was begun. The plan was traced upon the trestle-board of Life. The jewel of great price was cut, with many facets bright. From out the diamond of the heart 'twas wrought, a fragment from the Eternal One.

"Who calls me?" said the listening seed, and forthwith sprang the glorious blossom of the mighty past, the Ego-Soul.

It stood forth strong and deathless, unafraid—in might and empire clothed. Pure, holy and alone it lives, a chalice of Divinity, holding the Light which beckons on each Pilgrim Soul along the appointed Path. Let neither man nor demon dare to press as much as finger-tip upon its sacred Life.

It wills—It thinks—It loves.

And now, fight onward, daring one, upon thy head a star, upon thy lips a seal.

The Seraphim and Cherubim press back their snowy wings to make a way for thee to pass.

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The bright ones crowding round the Throne, hold out the victor's palm.

Not yet! Not yet! Thou art but man. To be a Saviour and a God, is now thy blessed Goal.

And the man sang forth,

"I come, I come." And he ran to do the bidding of the Voice.

He walked among the lowly of the earth, God's poor; he caught their failing hands; he dried their salt and bitter tears, and made the burden of the heavy-laden, light.

"Come, tired children all, and I will give thee rest."

And the tired children fell, and clasped His feet, and smiled amid their tears.

"Who calls?" they cried. "Who calls?"

And the Master of Compassion answered clear:

"'Tis I, be not afraid."

Amid the battle's bloody hosts, He walked serene and calm. He smiled into dead faces and into sightless eyes, turned upward to the Sun. He clasped the weak, imploring hands of those who tottered on life's brink, and left their souls in peace. And when the Conqueror Death passed by, and pressed his final seal upon their hearts, He laid the crown and victor's palm across their silent breasts and whispered, "Peace."

And now the dead in life rose up, and from

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their cold and spectral throats wafted the endless cry:

"Who calls, Who calls?"

Again the Master of Compassion answered clear:

"Brothers, oh! Brothers dear, 'twas I who called thee from the Dead."

And thus this "Master of the Day" walked forward to the Sun, enwrapped with Love as with a mantle, the Morning Star upon His brow.

Innumerable shining hosts enveloped Him as with a cloud. Behind them pressed an endless eager throng, all witness for the Truth, their glad eyes turned toward the Light.

All hail! the Martyrs of the Earth! All hail! They drained the cup down to the dregs; crushed on the rack, with fire burned, they smiled amid the flames.

Green were the boughs held in their hands, their garments dyed with blood, but on their faces shone a light, which made the sun a shadow seem.

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"For love," they cried, "for Love we died."

Priests, Kings, and Princes bent their once proud heads, their Empire gone from Earth.

"We yield our thrones, but dust are they; our crowns, but worthless dross."

And now a motley throng pressed onward through the Path. The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the homeless, famished ones. The tortured souls, with woes untold, their faces bathed with tears; those who in prisons languished long, and those who sorrowed, broken-hearted, lost; they crowded, Brothers all.

Upon these sad-of-Earth, a shadow lay, of ignominious Fate—but now behold, instead, each brow begirt with aureole of shining, radiant Light.

"Oh! give us love," they cried. "'Tis only Love we ask."

And, following after all, there came the tripping feet of children pure, their flower-like faces turned with one accord toward the Light. Each blew upon a reed a sound, compelling sweet.

Their innocent hands were raised on high, their voices rang with one acclaim.

"Oh, Lord, for all those who have sinned against thy little ones, have pity, Lord, forgive," and a murmur swelled throughout the throng, a shiver, as of pain; and the children cried once more, "For Love forgive, oh! Lord."

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The ranks of this vast throng closed up as on they pressed. Each clasped his Brother's hand, until one solid mass they moved; forward, still onward to the Light, with one great, mighty sound they all together cried:

"Who calls! Who calls!'

It was as if the Heavens were rent, and Earth fell into dust—and still each Ego-Soul cried out,

"Who calls! Who calls!"

And with the light of awful Space upon His brow, the Master-Saviour-God made answer clear:

" 'Tis *I* who called!"

"I called thee from the Seed, and now the Blossom and the Fruit are thou, the *individual Fruit of Sacrifice and Love.*"

And with the impress clear of this immortal sight, the Sage gave thanks to the Vendor of Dreams, whose presence seemed to linger on, whose image yet remained with photographic clearness, stamped upon his Soul.

"This is not all a dream," he cried, "this vision of a Cosmos Great. Is it but fiction rare—a mirage woven of the mind—and all contained within the tiny gland which swings within my brain? "Am I, the 'I-am-I,' the only Real?"

With bowed head, on he walked—striving to solve the problem old, and wishing he could meet once more the Ancient Man who

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smiled at him and touched him with his magic rod, for then perhaps he yet might read this riddle of the Sphinx.

And so the solitary Wanderer roamed through every land; far through the span of many lives, leaving his footprints on the Earth, that haply those who followed him might find the Way.

And if they saw upon the road the pressure of the little ass's hoofs, then sure were they to find the steps of Him who followed after, going the same Path.

One afternoon, when the gold-red sun hung low in the turquoise sky, and all the world seemed hushed in Peace, the aged man came walking with his little beast. Weary were they, but the light of the sun shone full upon the "Vendor of Dreams," until he seemed almost a shadow, filmy, translucent, clear.

The shining rays fell straight into his eyes, so that at first he did not see the Golden Gate which opened wide before him, nor did he see a form which stood at his right hand.

Her eyes were the color of green-sea jade, like ripe corn was her hair, sun-kissed, and over lips and cheeks was spread a rosy flush. Tall and serene she stood, while all around her breathed an atmosphere of pure, celestial joy.

She gently touched him on the arm.

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"Oh, Master-Magician, art thou not yet weary of thy journeying through the pathways of the Earth?"

He turned and looked upon her face, entranced.

"Art thou not called the 'World's Desire'," he said, "and 'Love'? I've needed sore thy magic touch."

She smiled, but answered not.

"How showest thou thyself to me a pilgrim old and poor? But a mad Vendor of Dreams am I. Of these I've given to beggar and to King, to peasant and to Prince, to man of Science and to Sage."

"And what thy price, Old Man? And what reward was thine?" the woman asked.

"I gave without reward," the Vendor said, "for far beyond all price they were, my Precious Dreams. In them I made the broken-hearted whole, and brought the sight to sightless eyes—the peace to tired souls, and this I did just for Love's sake." Then earnestly he looked upon her face.

And she who was called Love, spoke with her golden voice.

"Because thou didst bring sight to sightless eyes, and healed the wounded hearts, made straight the crooked ways, and brought back faith and honor lost, I, who am Love, will lead thee now into green fields and pastures new.

"Thou hast thyself earned glorious dreams

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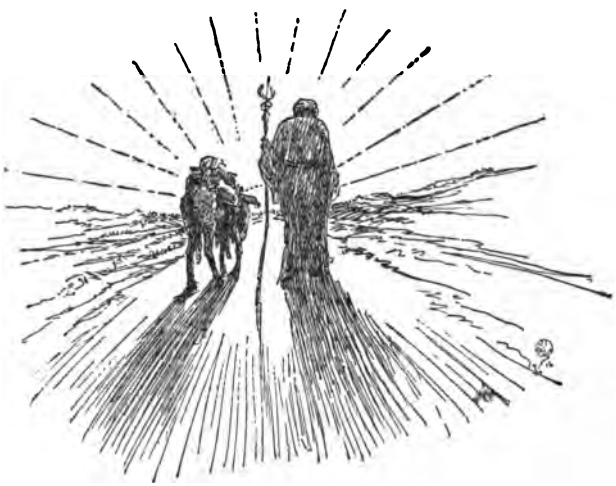
beyond compare, heard whispers of the mystic, magic Love, which welds together the vast mantle of the stars, the worlds, and all that they contain, and like a magnet draws all souls into one flaming, fiery Center, of Creative Love."

"Come," and she led the "Vendor of Dreams" toward the Radiant Light.

In pure, confiding faith, the little ass quick ambled on before into the Golden Gate, while the people in wonder cried:

"Look! Look! the blue star-flowers spring beneath their feet."

And so the faithful pair passed out of sight, led by the hand of Love, who left as gift to all mankind, the "wild Reality" the torture and the joy of Sleep and Dreams.



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